

P A R K

B E L L



ST. MARYS PARK

IMPROVEMENT CLUB

Treasures of St. Mary's Park

The next SMPIC meeting will be **Tuesday, August 8th** at 7:30 p.m in the St. Marys' Park Recreation Center, Murray and Justin. All residents, especially new members, are encouraged to join us for open discussion on local neighborhood issues. As usual, coffee and desserts will be served.

Every summer with the promise of favorable weather comes the flurry of summer projects. Looking around the neighborhood it is very encouraging to see many residents undertaking the tasks of home improvement. New landscaping, fresh paint, new roofs, remodeled kitchens and bathrooms, as well as structural and cosmetic repairs, all show signs of a community alive and well and preserving our investments for the future.

One of the biggest challenges for the homeowner of a vintage home, such as the spanish revival homes of SMP, is finding the balance between adding the amenities of modern living without destroying the original charm of the homes we have all come to admire. Kitchens and bathrooms, the most "worn" rooms of the home, are often the most remodeled rooms as well. The remodeling philosophies of the 50's and 60's stripped away much of the character of many older homes. Fortunately, the trends of the 80's and 90's seem to be in the direction of "restoration" rather than "modernization".

Looking for inspiration for the "restoration" of the kitchen and bathroom for our own home, I was surprised to find an abundance of original details still intact within many of the homes in SMP.

Finding original details proved to be the easy part. Finding someplace to purchase the new materials, especially tile, in the old colors and old styles was much more difficult. With perseverance, determination, research and a little luck, I was able to locate most of what was needed to give our kitchen and bathroom the authentic look we wanted at an affordable price. What I didn't expect to find was a colorful history and collection of tiles presented by The Oakland Museum as well as antique dealers all across America. It seems that many homes in our neighborhood are decorated with original art tiles that now have become quite collectible and valuable.

Most of the homes in SMP were built in the Spanish revival style dating from the mid to late 1920's. The interest in Spanish Colonial Revival architecture was at an all time high do to several factors: the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego, the restoration of the California

Franciscan Misslons, and most importantly the Arts and Crafts movement within the Bay Area. Along with many other artists and craftsman, several Arts and Crafts entrepreneurs in the tile industry set up local shops and began producing high quality tiles. Some of the more noteworthy labels in the Bay Area were Muresque Tiles of Oakland, California Art Tile (Caltile) of Richmond,as well as Handcraft and Woolenius.

From the Los Angeles area, tiles by Batchelder Tile Company and Claycraft Potteries were also readily available. Most of these tile companies produced pastel, multi-colored "slip" painted images over low sheen earth colored tiles. The most common colors were shades of brown, belge and blue-grey. These tiles were most often used for fireplaces and hearths featuring several pictorial tiles within a field of plain dull ones. The subject matter was usually California landscapes and missions, Spanish ships, medieval images of knights and shields as well as Native American, Mayan and Aztec images. The high quality and craftsmanship of these tiles combined with the renewed Interest in Spanish revival architecture supplied a strong demand for their product until the late 1920's. Unfortunately, by the early 1930's the Spanish revival trend waned and with the coming of the depression most of the local tile manufactures were bought out or went out of business.

Since most of the tile companies only produced these tiles for a few years and because of their beauty and quality, Arts and Crafts tiles have become very collectable and valuable. I recently found *one* 1928, 6x6 tile by Caltile in a tile shop for \$325.00.

Many homeowners in SMP are fortunate to have the original tile fireplaces and hearths. The original tiles and feature strips in our kitchens and bathrooms have also become valuable assets to consider preserving. For those of us who have lost the original details or would like to rebuild with affordable reproduction materials, the following list of vendors can supply many products that closely resemble the original styles.



**The Craftsman Guild**, 300 DeHaro St.,S.F.,CA-431-5425  
Excellent source for reproduction Arts end Crefts tile.

**Builders Booksource**, 300 DeHero St.,S.F.,CA-575-3980  
Great selection of books on all aspects of building, erchitecture, design end gardening.

**"The Arts and Crafts Movement in California"**, The Oakland Museum Herd bound book avaible at Builders Booksource.



**Latch Tile**, 1077 Mississippi St.,S.F., CA-824-2777  
Excellent source for reproduction vintege tile including box caps, cove bese, feature strips, 3x6 white porcelain tile and hand painted spanish style tile.

**Gilmer Potteries, Inc.**, 105 Werren P.O.Box 489, Gilmer, TX 75644 903-843-2509, Greet source for custom color porcelein bathroom end kitchen eccessories (towel ber, soep dish, etc.)